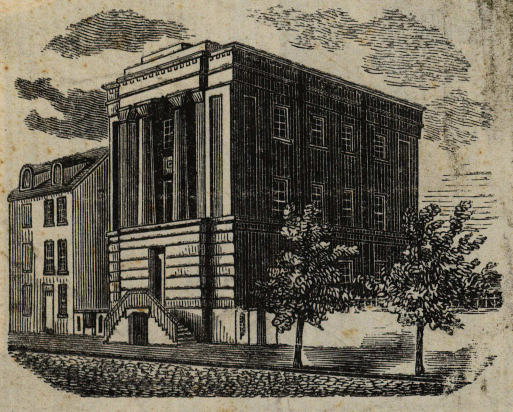
AN ESSAY ON

Acute and Chronic Gastritis.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE



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Acute and Chronic Gastritis.
and their treatment—

By L. A. Falligant.

Of all the various pathological conditions to which the human organism is liable, few are so troublesome in their nature or so hurtful in their influence on the general system, as diseases of any part of the digestive apparatus; and of the various organs composing this complicated mechanism, a derangement of the Stomach is the most quickly and the most keenly felt. If we admit, as we must necessarily do, that this is the chief organ concerned in the function of digestion, and that all nutriment must pass through this ordeal, so to speak, before it is fitted for adaptation to the wants of the body, we can at once perceive and fully appreciate why a lesion of this viscus should be attended with such troublesome

sequences, and require such prompt and special treatment. We may have Stomatitis, Tonsillitis, Pharyngitis, Laryngitis, &c., and yet the body receive an amount of nutriment sufficient to keep the vital powers from sinking; but if we have Gastritis, more particularly in its acute form, it is next to impossible to administer food in any shape — nor is it by any means always an easy matter to cause even our medicines to be retained.

Causes: The causes of Gastritis are exceedingly numerous. We may have certain influences acting mildly and bringing about the milder forms of this disease; or others producing their effects suddenly, violently, and even dangerously. Among the former are those irritating substances whose continued use debilitates the vigour of the stomach, and renders the organ irritable and weak; among the latter are the sudden ingestion of cold water or beverages when the body is heated, or of very hot tea, coffee, &c., or of corrosive poisons or those which produce violent local inflammation. I might here

mention the metallic poisons, the concentrated acids, Hydrocyanic and Sulfhuric acids &c., Tartarus Emet., Croton oil, Strychnia, arsenic, Alcohol, &c. I would beg leave, in this place, to extract from Copland's Dictionary a very complete and excellent enumeration of the causes of Gastritis — both the predisposing and the exciting. "Predisposing causes: Depression or exhaustion of organic nervous power, functional disorders of the digestive, assimilating and excreting organs, alterations of the circulating fluid, vascular plethora, high temperature with humid atmosphere, excessive use of stimulating food or liquor, sedentary habits, too close mental application, depressing emotions, the suppression of eruptions and accustomed discharges, convalescence from acute maladies, sympathy with diseases of other organs or tissues, tightlacing in females, &c. Exciting causes: Injurious ingesta, preexisting disease, and mechanical agents or physical influences." — Under the first of this classification of the exciting causes, I might rank the causes I have already mentioned in a preceding

portion of this paragraph: Under the second I might rank Dyspepsia, various subacute diseases of the stomach or adjacent organs, cancer, &c.; under the third I might with propriety class blows on the abdomen over the stomach, sudden cold, mental emotion, chagrin, anger, fright, &c, &c— all of which contribute their due share in disturbing or impairing the functional and harmonious action of the different organs and tissues of the body. To the list of predisposing causes, I will venture to add one which does not seem to have received from authors the notice which it merits, but which I am satisfied plays no unimportant part in depressing the functional activity of the stomach, and is a fruitful cause of the chronic form of this disease (gastritis) — I allude to onanism — a vice so prevalent that many have felt its hurtful effects; a sin which indulged, robs the body of health and vigour, the mind of intelligence, and the Soul of Salvation. I myself have seen many cases of chronic gastritis which undoubtedly had their origin in this fearful habit.

Subdivisions of Gastritis: Gastritis has been subdivided by authors into many different varieties, as phlegmonous, erysipelatous, &c.; but I am better satisfied with that classification which exhibits the acute and the chronic, the idiopathic and the symptomatic: with the symptomatic, however, I have little to do in my present essay, it being always referable to disease of some other organ. This classification will cover all cases and fully suffice in order to successful treatment. The intensity and violence of the inflammation will also be modified by the constitution and situation of the individual, and the number of coats of the stomach which are involved in disease.

Symptoms: Like most inflammatory diseases, acute gastritis makes its appearance with a chill or with shiverings followed by heat, feverishness, nausea, anorexia, and sometimes retching and vomiting. Soon the symptoms increase and we have intolerable thirst, desire for cold and acidulated drinks,

constant nausea and vomiting, pain and burning sensation about the stomach, tenderness on pressure of over the region of the stomach, and fever. These are the primary characteristic symptoms in the fully developed form of the disease. As the lesion progresses, the symptoms become more decided and frequently assume a more dangerous form. We then have constant retching and vomiting of all ingesta, pulse rapid, small, and weak, skin dry and hot, and sometimes red or flushed, great tenderness in the epigastric region, so tender that the patient cannot bear the pressure of the bedclothes, and will often raise even his own garments off his body, urine scanty and high coloured, constipation violent and obstinate, jactitation, groaning, delirium, &c., respiration quick and hurried, heart violently excited, dry cough, extreme uneasiness, &c. These symptoms endure or increase in violence until the last stage of the disease sets in; then they change and put on a much more fatal aspect. We now observe great

great prostration, contracted features, Hippocratic countenance, skin cold and pale, extremities cold, diminished tenderness of epigastrium so that we may touch it without occasioning pain, pulse very rapid and very feeble, regurgitation of the ingesta, (a very untoward symptom), low muttering delirium, and coma and death. When the cardiac orifice of the stomach is inflamed, we have almost constant and distressing hiccough. This is the course of the disease unless arrested by some of its varied terminations, or by medical treatment.

Sympathetic Symptoms: According to Louis and Andral we must pay very little attention to the condition of the tongue in Gastric or Gastro-enteric disease; but I am far more inclined to adopt the view of Dr Bell who regards the tongue as "the index of the condition of the general system." We have also intense headache, intolerance of light and noise, indications of irritation of the brain, tetanic spasms, respiration quick and hurried, heart violently excited, bronchitic cough, restlessness, sleeplessness, uneasiness, hot skin, thirst,

constipation, &c. In the second stage, prostration contracted features, skin pale and cold, extremities cold, &c., &c. These symptoms at first indicate a sympathetic irritation of the several organs; but by long continued irritation, the organs themselves become affected, and we have Pneumonia, Bronchitis, Arachnitis, Peritonitis. &c.

Terminations: Resolution, induration, ulceration, softening, exudation of false membrane, ~~softening~~, and pustulation-this latter commonly observed after the administration of Stibium.

Prognosis: The prognosis will depend upon the cause of the disease, the constitution and situation of the patient, the type of the disease, as also its stage of progress, the kind of treatment employed, &c., &c. I believe that it is now commonly admitted that the practice of bleeding formerly resorted to by allopathic practitioners is exceedingly detrimental to the welfare and prospects of ~~the~~ recovery of the patient.

Before I proceed farther I would entreat

the privilege of calling attention to one of the terminations of Gastritis, viz, the exudation of false membrane – a phenomenon which is also observed in true or membranous croup. Some recent physiologists have advanced the doctrine that the lining membrane of the air cells of the lungs is not mucous; and one of their prominent arguments is this, that coagulable lymph is effused from the air cells during an attack of Pneumonia. If this is any proof, it seems to me to prove also that the lining membrane of the larynx and trachea must also be not mucous, because in croup there is an exudation of coagulable lymph. I am inclined to believe that the poison which produces Pneumonia and true croup acts upon the layers of membrane situated beneath the mucous, and that the exudation of fibrine in Pneumonia is no proof of the absence of a mucous membrane in the air cells of the lungs. Having observed that a similar exudation had been noticed in some cases of Gastritis, I deemed this subject of sufficient

importance to merit a passing notice; and I trust that my digression will be pardoned.

Diagnosis: Gastritis may be distinguished from inflammation of the brain by the following symptoms: In the latter, the head symptoms are primary; in the former, they are secondary. In the latter the pulse is full and tense; in the former it is rapid, small and feeble. In the former there is tenderness of the epigastrium; in the latter there is none; and the vomiting which is present in diseases of the brain is characterized by a spasmodic regurgitation of the contents of the stomach. Gastritis may likewise be confounded with Pneumonia; but attention to the facts elicited by auscultation and percussion will soon determine the absence of any organic lesion of the pulmonary viscera — except in those cases where there is a complication of abdominal and thoracic disease. In hepatitis, we have the jaundiced complexion, the yellow tinge of the eye, the clay-coloured stool, the pain in the right hypochondrium, and in the right shoulder — this

latter, however, being by no means a constant symptom. In Peritonitis, the pain is more diffused and extends over a greater surface of the abdomen; and the tenderness on pressure is not limited to the region overlying the stomach. In enteritis, we are apt to have diarrhoea or dysentery according to the part of the bowels affected. Haematemesis may, by the careless practitioner, be confounded with the congestive form of Gastritis; but the entire absence of fever, and the exemption from all pain, will at once enable the enlightened physician to make out a clear diagnosis. I have, however, seen one case of this disease at sea. The sufferer was a young man of highly nervous temperament, and plethoric habit. We had not been at sea many hours before he was attacked with the most excessive and torturing vomiting, jactitation, redness of the face and congestion to the head. The symptoms increased in violence and shortly he began to spit up blood. During the entire attack which lasted until we arrived

on shore, he continued without fever. The peculiar symptoms in his case led me to regard it as a subacute form of gastritis.

In chronic gastritis the symptoms are very much the same as in the acute form; but characterized by the general absence of fever, sympathetic irritations, and continued pain. There is generally a feeling of fulness after eating, sometimes nausea and vomiting, tenderness on pressure, pain of occasional occurrence, flatulence, acidity, swelling of the stomach, fetid or tasteless eructations, sensation of heat and weight about the epigastrium, &c. The fluids ejected from the stomach are various, acid, alkaline, insipid and sweet, bitter and bilious, &c. Chronic gastritis may be distinguished from cancer of the stomach by the peculiar characteristic cutting, lancinating, gnawing nature of the pain in this latter malady and the presence of a tumour. When chronic gastritis depends upon disease of the neighbouring tissues or organs, the organs diseased must be treated.

Treatment of acute gastritis: We must first see that the patient is placed in a well ventilated room, but removed beyond the influence of any draught of air which may be passing through the room. He may be allowed the use of cold drinks, ice, iced-lemonade, cold affusions. &c. The remedies which will be found most generally of service in relieving the inflammation, removing the sympathetic irritations, and restoring the health of the patient, are Aconite, Arsenic, Belladonna, Bryonia, Mercurius, Nux Vomica, Ipecac, Pulsatilla, Carbveg, China, &c.

Aconite: Where the patient is of a lively plethoric habit, of a biliosonervous sanguine temperament, and particularly in those cases which have been brought on by sudden fright or chagrin — Indications: Anxiety and oppression of the chest, hurried respiration, short dry cough, determination of blood to the head, with redness of the face, throbbing of the carotids, arterial congestion, thirst, great desire for cold drinks, tenderness over the epigastrium,

burning sensation in the pit of the stomach, vomiting of undigested food or of bile, heat or coldness of the extremities, restlessness, &c.

Belladonna: exceedingly serviceable in scrofulous plethoric, irritable, sensitive persons, predisposed to spasmodic affections and venous congestions. It is particularly indicated by the following symptoms- congestion of blood to the head, distension of the veins, livid countenance, great sensibility to light and sound, nervous restlessness, dryness and lividity of the fauces and throat, dyspnoea, hurried asthmatic respiration, rapid small pulse, congestive headache, dry spasmodic cough, delirium, Spasms, ~~twitching about~~, anxiety, &c-

Bryonia; is more useful when the serous coating of the stomach is affected, and where there is a foul bitter taste, yellow coating of the tongue, nausea with bitter bilious eructations and vomiting of bile, profusi sweat, great sensitiveness of the abdomen, scanty reddish urine, constipation, &c.

Mercurius: violent tearing headache, slimy coating of the tongue, nausea and vomiting of bile, great sensitiveness of the epigastrium, burning heat of the abdomen, intolerable pains in the epigastrium, constipation, restlessness, profuse copious sweats which afford no relief but leave the patient greatly debilitated, &c.

Nux Vomica: heat of the head, foul taste, nausea and disgust for food, vomiting, pain on pressure over epigastrium, heat in the stomach extending all the way along the oesophagus, constipation, retention of urine, uneasiness, &c. Nux will be found most valuable in hypochondriacal, melancholic, irritable temperaments, and particularly when the attack has been induced by the excessive use of stimulating food or drink, sedentary habits, dissipation, &c.

Ipecac: ~~excessive~~ continued vomiting. Asthmatic suffocative cough, anguish, dread of death, alternation of heat and cold, redness and paleness, cold sweat, sunken features, scanty urine, feeble pulse, &c.

Pulsatilla corresponds to many of the symptoms both of Nux and Ipecac. It will be of much service in lymphatic temperaments, or when the attack has been brought on by the use of greasy or fat food, and the exacerbation occurs in the evening.

China is useful when there is bilious vomiting, venous congestion of the head, distension of the veins, blueish complexion, great debility, cold extremities, cold clammy sweat, colliquative symptoms, hemmorrhage, &c.

Chamomilla; exceedingly useful in highly irritable temperaments, and where the attack has been induced by a fit of anger or chagrin.

Arsenic;- This drug will be found invaluable in the later stages of the disease, more particularly when there is great anxiety, icy coldness of the extremities, cold clammy colliquative sweat, excessive debility, violent burning thirst, inability to bear any liquid on the stomach, sometimes

discolouration of the epigastrium, general Symptoms of a gangrenous termination, small thready wiry pulse, &c., &c.

In Chronic Gastritis, the chief remedies are Nux vom., Sulphur, Bryonia, Ignatia, & Pulsatilla. The indications for Sulphur are, Burning sour eructations, nausea after a meal, sometimes accompanied with vomiting, morning nausea, water brash, oppression across the chest after a meal with sensation of warmth in the chest, burning in oesophagus from below upwards, with sour eructations, sensation in the throat as if a greasy vapour were rising from the stomach, and loss of appetite.

Ignatia; This remedy will be found particularly serviceable in nervous hysteric individuals. The indications for its use are, Want of appetite and prompt satiety, risings of bitter fluid, hiccough every time one eats, nausea and vomiting of food, feeling of emptiness and

weakness in the pit of the stomach, periodic cramp in the stomach, &c.

Other remedies which may be found of inestimable value in certain cases of acute and chronic gastritis, are Antimon. crud., Lycopodium, Carbs veg., Cocculus, Phosphoric, Muriatic and Nitric acids, Ferrum, Stibium, Rhus Tox, &c.

In Gastritis too much attention cannot be paid to diet- more particularly in the chronic form; as in the acute variety the patient rarely ever desires food. All indigestible food and stimulating drink must be avoided; and all substances which disturb the digestive process. Daily exercise, and frequent bathing will be found excellent adjuvants in the treatment. After the crisis of an acute attack is over, the patient should still be confined to his bed, and not allowed even to rise up in bed until his strength is in some degree regained; and great prudence in diet must be exercised until recovery is complete.

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